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"'Entangling Alliances with None': John Quincy Adams, James K. Polk, and the Impact of Conflicting Interpretations"

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"Entangling Alliances with None": John Quincy Adams, James K. Polk, and the Impact of Conflicting Interpretations

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George Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine are widely seen as being the two fundamentally important declarations of early American foreign policy principles. In 1826, President John Quincy Adams, who was strongly influenced by Washington's foreign policy ideas, and was the chief architect of the Monroe Doctrine, attempted to define the important legacies of each of those documents for future generations through his proposal to send a U.S. delegation to the Congress of Panama. While Adams believed that the principles he was asserting to justify participation in this unprecedented gathering of plenipotentiaries were the logical extension of those first declared in the Farewell Address, most Americans disagreed with his interpretation. They favored a more rigid and isolationist view of that document informed by Thomas Jefferson's inaugural address promise of "entangling alliances with none." Equally as important, the ultimate failure of the Panama Congress effectively swept the Monroe Doctrine aside, leaving it to be taken up by President James K. Polk in the 1840s to justify a more forceful American foreign policy and the occupation of Yucatan following the Mexican War. John C. Calhoun issued a strong challenge to Polk's reinterpretation – as well as a harsh rebuke to Adams's view of American foreign policy – but history has come to see the Doctrine for Polk's more aggressive corollary. This article will demonstrate how contingent American understandings of Washington's Farewell Address were on "entangling alliances with none," and how the interpretation this produced led to the abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine in 1826, despite the fact that it was intended as an expansion of Washington's principles. This abandonment left the Doctrine to be reintroduced and reinterpreted twenty years later as encompassing principles much different than those Washington or Adams would have endorsed.

On 19 September 1796 President George Washington published his Farewell Address to the American people. In it he announced his intention to retire from the presidency at the end of his term, as well as some observations and warnings for Americans, most importantly relating to his principles for the conduct of foreign policy. Washington warned of the dangers of foreign influence being exercised domestically. He cautioned that every American had to always be cognizant of what the true interests of the United States were, and to recognize that they were not located in or with the vicissitudes of European politics and warfare. He emphasized the importance of American neutrality in foreign conflicts, and the need to maintain American independence and freedom

of action by avoiding permanent alliances. He believed that if these princi were faithfully adhered to,

> the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest guided by our justice shall Counsel.

The principles Washington put forward represented a pragmatic approacl foreign policy, in that they called on the nation to honestly assess its stren and weaknesses and then construct policies best suited to protecting Amer interests. They also understood that those strengths and weaknesses, as wel those interests, would change over time. Thus, while the principles of Farewell Address would endure, the specific foreign policies they infor would necessarily change. If the United States maintained these principles remained at peace with the rest of the world, giving to itself the time neces to cement the bonds of Union and to grow and prosper economically territorially, the country would mature into the global power Washington kı it would become.[1]

Twenty-seven years later the United States had become that w power, when President James Monroe announced in his seventh annual mess to Congress on 2 December 1823 the non-colonization principle and the doct of two spheres, which together have come to be known as the Monroe Doctri The non-colonization principle declared "that the American continents, by free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by European powers." The doctrine of two spheres argued for a compl separation of the European and American systems, and the ending of European interference and influence in the Americas. Neither of th principles sought to threaten existing European colonial possessions, such Canada or Cuba, but did forewarn against the transfer of such possessions other powers, and threatened U.S. action should Europe forcibly intervene Latin America.[2] These principles were pronounced in response to speci foreign developments confronting Monroe's administration, but were seen Secretary of State John Quincy Adams as comprising the broader principles the foundation of U.S. foreign policy. The Doctrine, and its call for Europe remain uninvolved in American affairs, was intended by Adams as the necess corollary to Washington's warning in his Farewell Address for the United Sta to abstain from European entanglements.3

While Adams saw the Monroe Doctrine as the logical extension Washington's principles, he was one of the few who interpreted it that w especially as the crisis it was meant to meet faded away. As a response

possible European intervention in the Americas it was nearly universally hailed in the United States upon its enunciation, but even a few months later some began to see it as potentially endangering America's longstanding policy of neutrality. By this time, not only did Adams differ from a growing number of Americans in his evaluation of the ongoing importance of the Monroe Doctrine, but he also had a dramatically different understanding of Washington's Farewell Address. The Address had been published to much popular acclaim and, after Washington's death in December 1799, it came to be seen as the defining textual contribution of his life. The Address was memorialized in the hundreds of eulogies given to Washington and, according to historian François Furstenberg, this national commemoration turned the Farewell Address into "a state of inviolable political principles" and turned it into a "sacred text."[4] While the Address had always been important, from that time forward all Americans would look to it for guidance and wisdom.

A second key event to shape American conceptions of the meaning and importance of the Farewell Address was Thomas Jefferson's inauguration as president in March 1801. In an inaugural address full of quotable passages, Jefferson famously promised "Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."[5] Whether Jefferson intended it as such or not, Americans saw "entangling alliances with none" as an allusion to the principles of Washington's Farewell Address, and the phrase immediately entered the popular lexicon as a way of pithily summarizing the core principles of American foreign policy. "Entangling alliances with none" was regularly hailed in toasts and speeches, and was cited in editorials and school books. But over time, it was increasingly seen as having originated with the Farewell Address rather than with Thomas Jefferson, and within a decade it was commonly discussed as a Washingtonian precept.[6] This association gave greater authority to both the phrase, which now had Washington's weight behind it, and to the Farewell Address itself, as its nuanced and complex approach to foreign policy could now be much more easily recalled and discussed. The problem was that the simplicity of "entangling alliances with none" and the principle that it expressed, came to overshadow that nuanced approach; what had been intended as general principles to guide the construction of foreign policies best suited to upholding American interests became a rigid declaration of a permanent foreign policy of non-involvement with the rest of the world. In 1801, with the United States weak and Europe at war, such an approach was necessary. But by 1823, with the United States a much stronger power, the emergence of a free and largely republican Latin America, and Europe allied against them, "entangling alliances with none" prevented the consideration of broader foreign policies that may have better protected American interests.

John Quincy Adams, who had been a proponent of Washington's system of foreign policy for several years before the Farewell Address was first published never conflated "entangling alliances with none" with Washington's true meanings, but he was in the minority by the 1820s. This was amply

demonstrated by his crafting of the Monroe Doctrine as an extension of t Farewell Address but increasing public concern that it conflicted wi Washington's principles. It was also dramatically reinforced in tl congressional debate over President John Quincy Adams's proposal to send U.S. delegation to the Congress of Panama. The congress was conceived of l Simón Bolivar as a gathering of the newly independent nations of the Americ to coordinate commercial and belligerent concerns; in its earliest versions it w. intended as the first step in the creation of a Latin American alliance along tl lines of the European Holy Alliance. However, by the time the congress met : 1826, no one, except for possibly Bolivar, still had such hopes for it. The ve fact that the United States was invited to participate – by three differe countries no less – exemplified these divergent expectations. After muc deliberation and repeated assurances that the United States would not be aske to violate its policy of neutrality in the ongoing conflicts between Spain and i former American colonies, Adams accepted the invitations.[7]

The instructive document for understanding what Adams hoped t achieve at Panama is the instructions Secretary of State Henry Clay drafted fc the ministers appointed to represent the United States there. Beyond outlinin what America's role at the congress would be – non-belligerent, strictly neutr – and detailing the types of commercial agreements the ministers were t pursue, what emerges from a review of these instructions is that much of wh the United States expected to accomplish rested with the example they hoped t set Latin America. More specifically, the basic maxims of Washington' Farewell Address were put forward as the main objects of the America mission. The instructions called for "the preservation of peace among [the Lati American nations], and with the rest of the world. The cultivation of peace i the true interest of all Nations, but it is especially that of infant States." Adam and Clay urged that "the policy of all America will be the same, that of peac and neutrality, which the United States have, heretofore, constantly labored t preserve." They also argued for the need to prevent "foreign interference," in al of its guises, and for all Americans to be "equally scrupulous in refraining fron all interference in the original structure, or subsequent interior movement, of th Governments of other independent Nations." It was in the best interests of th Americas, both north and south, to pursue a complete neutrality in the affairs o other nations, and to avoid foreign interference and influence, both as the victin and the aggressor.[8]

Equally important as spreading the principles of the Farewell Address Adams also saw the Panama Congress as the ideal opportunity to refocus the discourse surrounding the Monroe Doctrine. He wanted each Latin Americar nation to adopt the non-colonization principle as its own, and to permanently pu to rest that portion of the doctrine of two spheres relating to any possible U.S. defense of Latin America against European aggression. On the non-colonization principle, Adams firmly believed that its widespread adoption would permanently stave off any attempted European colonization in the western hemisphere, as long as each nation pledged to adopt and defend the principle as

its own. Adams's opponents argued that international adoption of any part of the Monroe Doctrine would bind the United States to act in defense of other nations' territorial integrity. Such concerns were understandable given that several Latin American countries hoped that the United States would be willing to contract offensive and defensive alliances with them in order to defend against European intervention. In the doctrine of two spheres, they saw a general pledge of support on the part of the United States to assist them in maintaining their independence, but this was not what Adams and Monroe had intended and such proposals were consistently turned down.[9] In the Panama instructions, Adams and Clay sought to clarify the U.S. position. They explicitly stated that the doctrine of two spheres had passed, that there was no longer any danger of a general European intervention in Latin America, and that any discussion of alliance under its auspices was inappropriate. As a general principle, the United States still believed in the doctrine of two spheres, but it would not violate its own longstanding principles by pledging itself to defend another nation's sovereignty. The Panama instructions demonstrate that Adams was putting forward Washington's Farewell Address and those main principles in the Monroe Doctrine were to be spread at the Congress. Simultaneously, he was backing away from the temporary policy of resistance to European aggression in Latin America that the Doctrine announced.

With this approach in mind, Adams informed Congress in December 1825 of the invitations and their acceptance, and submitted the names of nominees for a mission to Panama.[10] Adams believed congressional consideration of the nominations and monetary appropriation to be necessary to carry out the mission could be completed in a matter of weeks. But a strenuous opposition was mounted, which caused the debate to last almost four-and-a-half months.[11] At its heart, the debate hinged on the contention of the mission's opponents that participation in the Congress of Panama would violate American neutrality and would cement the Monroe Doctrine's less desirable aspects by pledging the United States to defend Latin American independence. Adams and his supporters assured the opposition that participation would not violate American neutrality and that simply being at the congress could not pledge the United States to anything, let alone to war. Most disturbing to the minds of the mission's opponents, as Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina expressed it, was that if the United States sent ministers to Panama, it would "violate the maxim of the Father of his Country, which enjoins upon us, as the most sacred of duties, 'to cultivate peace and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.'"[12]

Adams attempted to ease such concerns by reminding Congress of the true meanings of Washington's Farewell Address. Adams asked Congress to "Compare our situation and the circumstances of that time with those of the present day." Recalling Washington's original language, he stipulated that "Europe has still her set of primary interests with which we have little or a remote relation. Our distant and detached situation with reference to Europe remains the same." Closer to home much had changed since Washington's time,

as what were once "European colonies, with the greater part of which we had r more intercourse than with the inhabitants of another planet," had bec "transformed into eight independent nations, extending to our very borders, . . with whom we have an immensely growing commercial, and *must* have ar have already important political, connections" Adams concluded that Washington had written his Address in 1826 instead of 1796, he would hav revised his wording to assert "that *America* has a set of primary interests whic have none or a remote relation to Europe." As far as Adams was concerne "the acceptance of this invitation, . . . far from conflicting with the counsel c the policy of Washington, is directly deducible from and conformable to it."[13]

Adams was contending that an honest assessment of the best interest of the United States, as called for by the Farewell Address, required that th nation maintain closer ties with Latin America, or at least acknowledge that th United States shared a greater common interest with that region than it did wit Europe. However, these arguments fell on deaf ears as Adams was unable t disabuse the mission's opponents of their belief in a Farewell Address define by "entangling alliances with none." Despite the fact that the mission to Panam was ultimately approved by Congress, what emerged from the debate was tha many Americans saw the Monroe Doctrine as necessary when it was enunciate but dangerous for the future. Americans conceived of the Farewell Address a the rigid "entangling alliances with none," and not the broader principles Adam argued for and Washington intended. That the mission was passed too late tc actually enable the American delegation to participate in its deliberations, thus preventing the ministers from achieving any of Adams's stated goals, only further confirmed these outcomes.[14]

After the Panama debate, the Monroe Doctrine was largely forgotten by most Americans as an expression of useful foreign policy principles until it was reintroduced in 1845 by President James K. Polk in his first annual message to Congress. After discussing the challenges facing the administration related to Texas and Oregon, Polk declared to Congress that the United States was "sincerely desirous of preserving relations of good understanding with all nations." But, he added, it could not "in silence permit any European interference on the North American continent." Polk continued by announcing that "should any such interference be attempted," the American people would be "ready to resist it at any and all hazards," as they could not "view with indifference attempts of European powers to interfere with the independent action of the nations on this continent." After these implicit references, Polk then explicitly raised the Monroe Doctrine, proclaiming that the non-colonization principle "will apply with greatly increased force should any European power attempt to establish any new colony in North America. In the existing circumstances of the world the present is deemed a proper occasion to reiterate and reaffirm the principle avowed by Mr. Monroe and to state my cordial concurrence in its wisdom and sound policy." According to Polk, America's "settled policy" was "that no future European colony or dominion shall with our consent be planted or established on any part of the North

American continent."[15] While on the surface he seemed to be rendering a faithful restatement of the Monroe Doctrine, Polk, in reality, was returning to and even strengthening the policy of resistance and the threats and warnings that John Quincy Adams had backed away from twenty years earlier.[16]

Polk's more forceful reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine became a point of contention in the United States Senate in April 1848 when he introduced it as the basis for American intervention in the ongoing Caste War between the white and Indian populations of Yucatan. As a means of extricating themselves from the war, the whites in power had appealed to the United States, Great Britain, and Spain for assistance and offered up sovereignty over Yucatan as payment.[17] On 29 April 1848, Polk addressed the Senate urging the necessity of humanitarian aid to help bring an end to the "war of extermination against the white race" being waged by the Indians. It was not just humanitarian concerns that weighed on Polk's mind, as he was also greatly troubled by the "Similar appeals for aid and protection" that had been made to Britain and Spain. He believed that the United States had no choice but to intervene in Yucatan. The non-colonization principle dictated American action. Polk further argued that even though American principles normally required neutrality in foreign conflicts, in this case the doctrine of two spheres and its declaration that "We should consider any attempt on [Europe's] part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety," actually took precedence. Thus, using what might best be described as convoluted logic, Polk concluded that in order to prevent a possible European intervention in or colonization of Yucatan, the United States needed to preemptively intervene instead. The Monroe Doctrine, originally a call for non-intervention, was now being used to justify intervention. [18]

Coming on the heels of America's victory in the Mexican War, Polk's Yucatan message was enthusiastically greeted by many in the Senate as providing an opportunity for the United States to flex its muscle internationally and to take a stand against European aggression in defense of its own principles. At the same time, a great many senators questioned the legitimacy of intervention, as well as Polk's motives in citing both humanitarian and security concerns as possible reasons to act.[19] The most important critique of Yucatan intervention was issued by John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. With the death of John Quincy Adams just two months earlier, Calhoun, who had been James Monroe's Secretary of War when the Monroe Doctrine was formulated, was uniquely situated to offer insight into the original intentions and meanings of the Doctrine. From the moment Polk's message was first read to the Senate, Calhoun deemed its interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine to be "A broad and dangerous principle, truly! It goes far beyond Mr. Monroe's declaration." When the Senate considered a bill to enable the president to take temporary military occupation of Yucatan, Calhoun launched an extended attack on Polk's use of the Doctrine as a basis for the action.[20] First, he argued, as Adams and Clay had in the Panama instructions of 1826, that the doctrine of two spheres had been declared to meet the specific crisis of 1823 and belonged "to the

history of that day" and could not be used twenty-five years later to justify American intervention. Second, he challenged the legitimacy of the non-colonization principle, describing it as having been improper and unwise, and alleging that "it never became a subject of deliberation in the cabinet. . . . It originated entirely with Mr. Adams." Not having been debated by the cabinet, it lacked the "precision and clearness" that marked the fully vetted doctrine of two spheres. Calhoun was clearly playing fast and loose with historical fact. While it was technically true that the non-colonization principle was not submitted to the full cabinet for review in November and December 1823, this was because it had already been declared to the Russian minister during the previous summer. Its inclusion in Monroe's annual message was as part of the discussion of the administration's achievements during the previous year; far from being smuggled in, as Calhoun implied, it was included with Monroe's full knowledge and sanction. The reinterpretation of past events aside, Calhoun's assertion was that if the non-colonization principle was a mistake not truly approved of by Monroe when it was first offered, it certainly should not be used to legitimize the occupation of Yucatan.

Specific principles aside, Calhoun's most important argument against the intervention in Yucatan was that the Monroe Doctrine was nothing more than a series of powerless declarations that could not dictate American action in response to world events. He took issue with Polk's claim "that these declarations have become the settled policy of this country." As Calhoun saw it, "Declarations are not policy, and cannot become settled policy." He concluded that Polk "must mean that it has become the settled policy of this country to resist what these declarations refer to; and to resist, if need be, by an appeal to arms." Calhoun questioned if this was actually the case. "Has there been one instance in which these declarations have been carried into effect by resistance? If there be, let it be pointed out. Have there not been innumerable instances in which they have not been applied? Certainly." The very fact that the Doctrine had to be reasserted by Polk in 1845 lent a great deal of credence to Calhoun's point. His best evidence was that "these declarations, under this broad interpretation, were disavowed entirely three years afterwards by the vote of the Republican party, when the administration of Mr. Adams endeavored to carry them out practically, by sending ministers to the Congress at Panama." While Calhoun was belying his antipathy towards Adams in his misrepresentation of the motivation for the Panama mission, his larger point that the Doctrine had been set aside in those debates was quite accurate. In summing up Polk's interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, Calhoun declared that "What the President has asserted in this case is not a principle belonging to these declarations; it is a principle which, in his misconception, he attempts to graft upon them, but which has an entirely different meaning and tendency. . . . It goes infinitely and dangerously beyond Mr. Monroe's declaration." Calhoun was not entirely dismissive of Monroe's principles, but believed they needed to be applied much more honestly, carefully, and selectively.[21] It was announced two days after Calhoun's speech that a treaty had been agreed to between the

whites and Indians in Yucatan, thus saving Congress from having to make a determination on employing the Monroe Doctrine to legitimize intervention. There is a great irony in the fact that, despite his denigration of Adams's behavior and motives, Calhoun was arguing for the same interpretation of the lasting importance of the Monroe Doctrine that Adams had in 1826. They disagreed on the wisdom of the non-colonization principle, but they both saw the larger Doctrine as expressive of useful principles and not as a binding policy to use force around the world, a policy that had been renounced in 1826 and was being reasserted in 1848.

What emerges from this consideration of John Quincy Adams and the Panama Congress, and James K. Polk, John C. Calhoun, and Yucatan intervention, is a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of Washington's Farewell Address and a much more limited view of the Monroe Doctrine than Polk suggested. The Yucatan episode also reinforces how costly Adams's 1826 failure to redefine the legacies of Washington's Farewell Address and Monroe's Doctrine truly was. Not only had "entangling alliances with none" been further cemented in the popular mind as the true meaning of the Farewell Address, but the abandonment of the Doctrine as a declaration of useful principles meant that it was left open for future reinterpretation. Polk chose to use the Doctrine as a threat to prevent European interference in the Americas and ultimately as justification for U.S. intervention in the affairs of other nations, an understanding of it far removed from Adams's conception of it as an extension of Washington's Farewell Address. Calhoun himself was just as guilty of putting his own spin on the Doctrine's original meanings and purposes, especially as it pertained to Adams and the non-colonization principle. All of this is not to say that if Adams had succeeded in 1826 the Monroe Doctrine would have necessarily been viewed or used any differently after Panama. But, the rhetoric surrounding its use would certainly have been different. Along these same lines, there is no way to know how Washington's Farewell Address would have been received and understood by succeeding generations without the reconceptualization it underwent as a result of "entangling alliances with none."

1George Washington, "Farewell Address," 19 September 1796. George Washington, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931-44), 35:214-38, esp. 231-7.

[2]James Monroe, "Seventh Annual Message," 2 December 1823. James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 11 vols. (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1908), 2:209, 218-9

[3] For the main primary source account of the development of the Monroe Doctrine, see John Quincy Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848, ed. Charles Francis Adams, 12 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874-7), 6:177-224. Leading secondary works to discuss various aspects of the Doctrine's creation and intentions, include Dexter Perkins, The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927); Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949), 363-408; Thomas B. Davis, Jr., "Carlos de Alvear and James Monroe: New Light on the Origin of the Monroe Doctrine," The Hispanic American Historical Review 23, no. 4 (1943): 632-49; T. R. Schellenberg, "Jeffersonian Origins of the Monroe Doctrine," The Hispanic American Historical Review 14, no. 1 (1934): 1-31; and Ernest R. May, The Making of the Monroe Doctrine (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[4] François Furstenberg, In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 39, 44.

[5] Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," 4 March 1801. Richardson, Messages and Papers, 1:323.

[6] This was never universally the case, as there have always been references to "entangling alliances with none" as a Jeffersonian phrase, but instances of correct attribution greatly decreased after the end of Jefferson's presidency.

[7] Invitations were received from Mexico, Colombia, and Central America on 1, 2, and 14 November 1825, respectively. Guadalupe Victoria to John Quincy Adams, 1 November 1825; Pablo Obregon to Henry Clay, 3 November 1825; José Maria Salazar to Henry Clay, 2 November 1825; and Antonio José Cañaz to Henry Clay, 14 November 1825. William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American Nations, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925), 3:1641; 1642-3; 2:1286-8; and 883.

[8] Henry Clay to Richard C. Anderson, Jr. and John Sergeant, 8 May 1826. Henry Clay, The Papers of Henry Clay, ed. James F. Hopkins, 10 vols. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959-91), 5:313-44, esp. 320-1, 339.

[9] For Latin American proposals to the United States for alliance under the auspices of the Monroe Doctrine, see, for example, José Maria Salazar to John Quincy Adams, 2 July 1824; and José Silvestre Rebello to John Quincy Adams, 28 January 1825. Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 2:1281-2; 808-10. Several other proposals were also made. For the American responses to these proposals, see John Quincy Adams to José Maria Salazar, 6 August 1824; and Henry Clay to José Silvestre Rebello, 13 April 1825. Ibid., 1:224-6; 233-4.

[10] John Quincy Adams, "First Annual Address," 6 December 1825; and John Quincy Adams, "Special Message," 26 December 1825. Richardson, Messages and Papers, 2:302; 318-20.

[11] For an extended discussion of the congressional debate over the Panama mission, see Jeffrey J. Malanson, "The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama, 1825-1826: Washington's Farewell Address, Monroe's Doctrine, and the Fundamental Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy," Diplomatic History 30, no. 5 (Nov. 2006):813-38, esp. 820-36.

[12] Sen. Robert Y. Hayne (South Carolina), March 1826, Register of Debates in Congress, 19th Cong., 1st sess., 175. Also see the remarks of Rep. Louis McLane (Delaware), 3 April 1826. Ibid., 2009.

[13] Emphasis in original. John Quincy Adams, "Special Message," 15 March 1826. Richardson, Messages and Papers, 2:337-8.
[14] For a lengthier discussion of the ramifications of the congressional debate, see Malanson, "Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama," 836-8.
[15] James K. Polk, "First Annual Message," 2 December 1845. Richardson, Messages and Papers, 4:398-9.
[16]For a discussion of Polk's foreign policy goals in reintroducing the Monroe Doctrine in 1845, see Dexter Perkins, Perkins, The Monroe Doctrine, 1826-1867 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), chapter two.
[17] For a more thorough discussion of the background to the Yucatan episode, see Frederick Merk, The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 194-207.
[18] James K. Polk, "Special Message," 29 April 1848. Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 4:581-3.
[19] For the Senate debate over the Yucatan message, see Congressional Globe, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix, 590-643. For an extended secondary discussion of the debate, see Perkins, Monroe Doctrine 1826-1867, 174-91; and Merk, Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 207-32.
[20]John C. Calhoun (Democrat), South Carolina, 29 April 1848. Cong. Globe, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix, 590.
[21] John C. Calhoun (Democrat), South Carolina, 15 May 1848. Ibid., Appendix, 630-1.

Re-Orienting Orientalism: American Narratives of the Early China Trade

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Introduction

American writings on East Asia have been ignored in the major theory-building studies of Orientalism, namely Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) and Malini Johar Scheuller's U.S. Orientalisms (1998). By showing how Europe established things "Occidental" as normal and dominant, correlatively with representations of the "Oriental" as exotic and inferior, Said shaped the persistent belief that Western writing about the East must be treated as part of a systematic discourse designed for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Scheuller similarly argues that the dominant American cultural discourses on the East were deeply invested in dreams of empire. Making frequent references to China and Japan, she critiques a principal Orientalist dichotomy: "USAmerican righteousness, morality, energy, and vibrancy versus Oriental corruption, deviance, lassitude, and passivity."[1] Despite recent challenges to Saidian Orientalism, which is, itself, primarily concerned with Europe's encounter with the Near and Middle East, and South Asia, this paradigm remains influential in discussing American attitudes toward the Far East.[2] There is, of course, racism, ethnocentrism, imperialism and religious intolerance expressed in American narratives of the China trade, but much of this writing shows remarkable interest in and admiration for many aspects of Chinese philosophy, culture, government, and industry. Narratives by American China traders Amasa Delano (1763-1823), Edmund Fanning (1769-1841), Amos Porter (1763-1815), and Charles Tyng (1801-1879) are much more dialogic and, overall, more positive in their treatment of the Orient than theories of Orientalism would lead us to believe.

Americans of the colonial period inherited a Renaissance fascination with the Orient as a region of philosophical wisdom, fabulous wealth, and curious customs. Imaginative and material contact with China—the Middle Kingdom, the Celestial Empire—began in America with books by Marco Polo, Louis Le Comte, Jean Baptiste Du Halde and Voltaire, and with translations of Confucian texts such as Great Learning (Da xue) and the anonymous Qing novel, The Pleasing History (Hao qiu zhuan), both of which were read and admired by Thomas Jefferson.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, tea and porcelain were brought to the colonies, and the rituals of serving and drinking from fine china tea sets had